

# *Internet Safety Tips*

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Since 1996, ePals has focused on creating a safe and secure environment for students to learn and explore. Students and teachers have enjoyed thousands of rewarding and educational learning exchanges, all the while protected by ePals multi-pronged approach to maintaining a secure environment.

We want your ePals experience to be fun, friendly and safe. We hope these general safety guidelines will help you make the most of ePals.

## **What we do:**

### **ePals Addresses Internet Safety From Many Angles.**

- ePals is designed to comply with COPPA, and FERPA.
- We have added safety features to email, including built-in email content and language filters, to help ensure appropriateness of email messages.
- Our spam and virus controls help prevent unwanted, inappropriate messages and scan attachments for viruses.
- ePals forums are moderated to ensure appropriate content.
- Adult users have the ability to set access levels, thereby limiting who can receive and send emails to ePals student users.

### **ePals Moderates and Restricts Member Profiles**

ePals staff moderates and approves all new profiles before any potential ePals' member can be added to our online database. We accept profile submissions from teachers, parents, higher education students, school officials and other supervisory adults only. We restrict profiles in this manner so that every student ePals member who has access to email has an adult associated with him or her, and therefore all email correspondence can be screened by an adult prior to receipt by a child. New profiles that have clearly not been submitted by a teacher, parent or other supervisory adult are rejected.

### **ePals Restricts Contact of our Members**

ePals members can only be contacted by an adult who has an approved ePals profile. You will always be able to find basic information about every member who contacts you through ePals. ePals staff will have additional information on every person who connects with you.

### **ePals Moderates all Forums**

ePals moderates all of our Forums to ensure that the messages contain appropriate content, and do not contain personally identifying information. You can read more about our discussion board guidelines [here](#). We also encourage you to contact us if you have concerns about the behavior of a poster on our Forums.

## **Additional tips for ePals members:**

1. Choose a responsible adult as the contact for your ePals profile. This contact person should screen all initial email correspondence.
2. Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening or that make you feel uncomfortable. See What to Do below.
3. Never give out any personally identifying information (such as addresses or phone numbers) to anyone you have not verified.
4. If you find a profile in our database that you know is intentionally erroneous or misleading, please let us know immediately.
5. Make sure your students and children know general safety tips apply to online situations too. These safety tips include:
  - Never arrange a face to face meeting without a parent, teacher or guardian present.
  - Never give out personally identifying information without approval of an adult teacher, parent or guardian.
  - Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening or that make you feel uncomfortable.
  - Always let a teacher, parent or other trusted adult know if you receive an upsetting message.
  - If you are suspicious of someone you've met online, always tell a responsible adult, like a teacher or parent.

## **What to do if you receive a suspicious email message:**

If you receive an email that is suspicious, threatening, or inappropriate, please alert ePals.

1. Immediately cease all correspondence with the individual - do not reply.
2. Save and print the message(s).
3. Do not investigate the suspicious message(s) yourself.
4. If the individual is an ePals member, inform us immediately, providing as much information as possible.
5. If the message contains threats of harm or other criminal content, immediately report it to your local police department.